

NEWS

From the Office of

Brad Mitzelfelt

Vice-Chairman and Supervisor, First District
San Bernardino County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 24, 2012



For information, contact
Andy Silva (909) 387-4830
www.sbcounty.gov/mitzelfelt

Supervisor Mitzelfelt Praises Pending Restoration of the Mojave Cross

SAN BERNARDINO – San Bernardino County Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt today praised a settlement that will clear the way for the historic Mojave Cross to be restored at its original location later this year.

“This historic icon of the desert, which simply and elegantly commemorates the sacrifice of those who served in World War I and later conflicts, is as much a part of our local and national history as any historical building or landmark, and I look forward to its restoration,” said Supervisor Mitzelfelt, whose district includes Sunrise Rock near Cima off Interstate 15, where the cross was located. “It should never have become a political football by those with a misunderstanding of the establishment clause of the First Amendment.”

The cross, first erected in 1934 and maintained by Veterans of Foreign Wars, of which Supervisor Mitzelfelt is a life member, was the subject of a lawsuit by the American Civil Liberties Union more than a decade ago, alleging that the cross violated the establishment clause of the First Amendment because it was located within the federally owned Mojave National Preserve. U.S. Rep. Jerry Lewis, R-Redlands, successfully pushed through a bill that authorized a land swap to put the one-acre parcel on which the cross sat in private hands.

That legislation was invalidated by a U.S. District Court and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals before the U.S. Supreme Court overturned those decisions in 2010.

The cross was stolen in May 2010 by vandals and a new cross will be erected and the area fenced. There will be signs stating that the parcel is private property and there will be a plaque explaining the history of the cross.

“When so much of our desert history has been lost due to excessive restrictions by the federal government, it is satisfying to see such a poignant and important part of our history – a part of our history that honors those who have sacrificed to preserve the freedoms we enjoy today – finally be restored to its rightful place and get the respect it deserves,” Supervisor Mitzelfelt said.